



Monthly Report on Tourism

Governors Conference on Tourism – Florida Tourism was at the lowest point in many years during 2009. Although 2010 is expected to produce a greater number of travelers, the past year has been difficult for motel/hotels and other accommodation venues. Based on information gathered during the meeting and in the absence of a tourism plan, the Sumter Chamber has made a decision to take advantage of trends which indicate that visitors are staying close to home and focus on becoming a destination for Regional Travel. Trends indicate that Eco-Tourism and Heritage Tourism will remain strong and that tourists are looking for packages.

Leads from the Governor's Conference on Tourism-

- Advertising leads for Recommend Magazine- This Visit Florida publication is an important component in the Florida Specialist Program. With a distribution life of one year, Recommend Magazine is the most broadly distributed magazine within the tour and travel trade. Low copy to ad ratio should mean better exposure. Ad placement secured in both the Golf and the Fishing and Boating Sections of the publication
- Online Reservation Center for Hotels/Motels- awaiting add'l information
- More information on Florida On-line Auctions which will allow participation by accommodations and attractions to increase their internet exposure.

Other Advertising:

- Chamber Directory – work on this product that is used in all Visitor packets. Expected completion date- November 30th. Contains both tourism and community information.
- Advertising was placed in Florida Monthly to promote Sumter County. We secured October and November advertising placement in order to secure the nice spread on Sumter County. Since we received the article in advance of placement, we are unable to print. Sample available.
- Advertising placed in Recommend Magazine (see above)
- Registration to participate in Govt. Day at The Villages on November 7th.

Promotional Items ordered: Pencil cups including photos, magnifying cards and bags with website ordered for distribution to tourists to promote the area.

Meeting with Diane Bedard- Owner of this area's Nature Host Travel Magazine. The publication is placed in area hotel/motel rooms in order to provide Visitors with activities during their stay. Although Citrus, Hernando and other surrounding Counties have a section, Sumter does not. Evidently the Sumter Section is owned by Ocala and they do not market the area because they do not have distribution in the area. Diane was asked about the possibility of requesting the Sumter section. Chamber offered to serve as an initial distribution center within Sumter County in order to allow the section to become established.

Tourism Planner: Bud Nocera, the tourism planner that was secured for an amount of 15,000 is no longer available on an unlimited basis. He is willing to complete a Sumter Tourism plan for Sumter County utilizing Winter Break and Spring Break. Chamber is in the process of reviewing additional planners.

Completion of Equine Survey - In preparation of promoting Sumter County as an equine destination, an inventory of equine resources were cataloged. Approximately 70 resources identified including: farms, show venues, vets, supplies, hotels, trailer repair etc. that could be used to attract equine tourism. We will continue working with surrounding Visitors Bureaus to develop this resource

CD- Initial work on CD to represent Sumter County. A demo is being produced that will be used to promote this new tool. The product will be inexpensive to produce and mail and should promote Sumter County as more technology forward. Kiosk placement sought in Bushnell, Wildwood and The Villages.

Meeting with John Legge to discuss processes and reallocation of funds. His input will be incorporated during the next presentation of financial statements.

In-Store Board Program- During the Governor's Conference on Tourism, Visit Florida announced a new program, in partnership with Beall's department store that will be used to promote tourism venues across the state through placement of large boards in Beall's stores. The board's will feature a Florida photo and will include a line of text from the venue. Photos were solicited from local tourism venues and photos from our files were submitted on a disc for use in this program. Release forms secured for all submitted photographs. We have been notified that Beall's may take some time in order to select the appropriate photos.

Local Board Program: Similar to the Visit Florida board program, the local board program would serve the purpose of increasing travel within our own community. Initial work to create sample boards in progress with a local advertising agency. Samples available for TDC review in November or December.

“News to Use” email for Sumter County- This email is based on Visit Florida’s “News to Use”. Timely information from Visit Florida that can be used to promote tourism is sent to identified area accommodations (according to our survey) and other interested attractions for use as they deem appropriate.

Prepare for Tourist Development Meeting –

Chamber Grant Review Committee meeting scheduled to review Grant Requests. This includes usual meeting preparation including grant research on Sunbiz, preparation of narrative, agenda, and acquisition of additional information and contact with the applicant to arrange an interview time.

TDC Meeting- This includes preparation of both electronic and physical package for TDC Meeting including grants, narrative and minutes from previous meeting, polling members to ensure quorum and minutes.

Active Promotion of Tourist Development Grant Information- to Clay Sink Cattle Drive (Heritage Tourism) and Glades Herp Farm which hopes to build a zoo in the not too distant future. This is a capital venture that, under Florida Statutes, can be funded by Tourist Development dollars.

Meeting with John Rohan, Director of Recreation in the Villages which included encouragement for The Villages to submit Tourism related information to the Chamber website and discussion of the Tourist Development grants.

Grants:

Grant award letters sent following the last meeting of the BOCC including Purchase Orders.

- Wildwood Winterfest
- Bushnell Fall Festival
- Dade Battlefield

Grants Processed & Closed and Impact Statement Secured

- Dixie Youth Minor

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